UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE
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PROSPECTIVE 1940 TURKEY CROP

Turkey producers are apparently planning to raise between 4 and 5 percent more turkeys in 1940 than in 1939, according to February 1 returns to the Agricultural Marketing Service from 4,550 growers. They indicate the intention to obtain about 1 percent fewer poults than last year from commercial hatcheries, but to increase home-hatchings about 9 percent. Growers reported 7 percent more turkey hens on hand than on February 1, 1939.

The numbers of turkey poults bought and home-hatched and the number of turkeys raised to market age in 1940 will be somewhat dependent on weather conditions and other unknown factors. But present reports make it seem probable that the number raised will exceed the record number raised last year, with major increases in the Central States and some decrease likely in the Far West.

At this time last year growers reported an increase of 15 percent in the number of turkey hens then on their farms, and an intention to raise 27 percent more turkeys than in the previous year. The actual increase in the number of turkeys raised last year, however, was a few percent less than intended. The increase might have been fully up to expectations if growers had been able to obtain as many turkey poults as they originally planned to purchase, but a moderate shortage of eggs and poults developed. While the percentage increase in turkey hens on hand February 1 this year was slightly greater than the intended increase in turkeys to be raised, the less active interest displayed thus far this season in early eggs and poults makes it doubtful if the available eggs will be as closely utilized as last year. In that case, the indicated increase of 5 percent in poults is probably a maximum.

Regional Indications: The intended increase in all poults is 11 percent in both the East North Central and South Central States. Increases of 6 percent in the North Atlantic States and 5 percent in the West North Central group are expected. In the South Atlantic States numbers are likely to be about the same as last year and in the Far Western States a decrease of 3 percent is indicated.

For poults to be bought or custom hatched, intended increases of about 2 percent in the West North Central States and of 4 percent in the South Central group partly offset decreases of 2 percent in the Far West and losses of from 5 to 8 percent in other areas.

Intended home hatchings show the greatest increase in the East North Central States, with a gain of 25 percent above last year. The increase is 14 percent for the North Atlantic and 13 percent for the South Central area, 9 percent in the West North Central region, and 2 percent in the South Atlantic. The Far Western States show a decrease of 6 percent from last year in the intended production of home hatched poults.

The shift this year toward more home hatched poults is in contrast to the situation last year, when the intended increase in hatchery poults was 34 percent and in home hatched poults 22 percent. It also runs contrary to the pronounced trends shown for many years past toward an increasing proportion of hatchery poults. The shift this year toward home hatched poults is observed mostly in the returns for large flocks, for the small flock producers apparently are continuing the shift toward an increasing proportion of hatchery birds.

The increase in the number of turkey hens on hand was greatest, 19 percent, in the East North Central States. In the Far Western States increases and decreases balanced. Other areas show increases ranging from 8 percent in the South Central States up to 13 percent in the North Atlantic area.

The indicated changes in numbers of turkeys for 1940, as percentage of numbers last year, are shown by major geographic regions in the following table:

PROSPECTIVE TURKEY PRODUCTION IN 1940

Geographic division	Estimated proportion of turkeys raised in 1939	Number of reports received	Numbers intended in 1940, in percent of number in 1939			
			Turkey hens on hand	Hatchery poults to be bought 1/	Home hatched poults 2/	Hatchery and home hatched poults combined
	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
North Atlantic	6.3	461	113	95	114	106
East No. Central	10.3	561	119	93	125	111
West No. Central	31.2	1,355	111	102	109	105
South Atlantic	7.8	442	110	92	102	100
South Central	20.4	726	108	104	113	111
Western	24.0	985	100	98	94	97
United States	100.0	4,550	107	99	109	104.6

1/ Including poults "custom hatched" for a fee from eggs supplied by the grower.
2/ Exclusive of poults being hatched by growers for sale as baby poults to other growers.

Total stocks of turkeys in cold storage on February 1 were 65,329,000 pounds this year compared with 28,264,000 pounds a year earlier and 28,236,000 pounds for the 5-year (1935-39) February 1 average. Approximately 65 percent of these turkeys are reported to have weighed 16 pounds and over compared with only 58 percent on the same date last year.

Prices to turkey growers on February 15 were low, averaging 14 cents per pound for the United States, in contrast with the 17.5 and 17.7 cents per pound received in mid-February of 1939 and 1938, respectively, and with the 5-year (1934-38) February 15 average price of 15.7 cents. The February price this year is the same as in 1937 and the lowest since 1912 except for the extreme depression years of 1933 and 1934. However, while the average price of turkeys was 14 cents, or 1.7 cents per pound lower than the 5-year average for that month, the average February 15 price for chickens was 12.2 cents, or 1.8 cents below the 5-year average

The purpose of the intention report is to furnish growers with early information of intended production for the country as a whole and in the different major geographic areas, in order that they may modify their plans if this appears desirable.